Hanging no Diſhonour.

BEING A

MODEST ATTEMPT

TO PROVE

That ſuch Perſons as have the Honour to make their EXIT at the TRIPLE-TREE are not always the greateſt VILLAINS in the Nation.

IN A

LETTER

FROM

GENTLEMAN HARRY,

Now under Sentence of Death in *Newgate.*

ADDRESSED

To VILLAINS of all Denominations

IN

GREAT BRITAIN.

LONDON,

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My Lords and Gentlemen,

THE Word *Villain*, which the ill-natured Part of Mankind have applied to our Fraternity for ſome Centuries paſt, as a Term of Reproach, if duly conſidered, has nothing in it ſo ſhocking as one would at firſt Sight imagine. The Word was at firſt uſed as a Law-Term, ſignifying a peculiar feudal Tenure then in uſe in the Iſland, when the civil Law governed our Courts of Juſtice; it was indeed the loweſt Kind of Tenure, and ſubjected the Vaſſal to very ſervile Offices; but ſtill it implied no Crime more than the Word *Knave*, which in our ancient Dialect ſignified only a Servant, as we may learn very plainly from ſome old Copies of the New Teſtament, where the Apoſtle *Paul* ſtiles himſelf a *Knave* of *Jeſus Chriſt*. At what Time the Words *Villain* and *Knave* came to change their natural Signification, or upon what Occaſion the People of this Iſland took it into their Heads to be frightened at the bare Sound of theſe Words, and apply them to ſuch Objects as they meant to expreſs the greateſt Deteſtation of, I am intirely at a Loſs to find out; but ſo it is, that theſe two Epithets are fallen into ſuch Diſrepute, eſpecially among the Vulgar, that every Cobler finds his Choler boil over ſo ſoon as they are tacked to his Name.

The Meaning of Words are certainly very arbitrary, and the Publick, no doubt, has a Right to impoſe what Senſe they pleaſe upon them: This I do not complain of; I am ſatisfied they ſhould change the Signification of Sounds and Phraſes as often as they pleaſe; but I complain, that when they have fixed the Senſe of certain Epithets, that they do not apply them uniformly, but confound them,

them, without Regard to Degrees or Circumſtances of Caſes. Thus the Word *Villain*, at this Day, ſignifies the moſt abandoned Wretch in Nature, a Creature without Faith or Honeſty, bound by no Laws, an Enemy to the Commonwealth, and a Nuiſance to Society. Now, I am not at all diſguſted that they ſhould apply the Term in that Senſe to ſuch as merit the high Title; but, as the *Devil* would have it, they obſerve no Rules in the Application of the Word; for a *Villain* is often applied to a little petty Raſcal that picks a Pocket, robs a Hen-Rooſt, or, at moſt, gathers ſmall Contributions on the Highway.

This Practice, my Lords and Gentlemen, is a groſs Affront upon your worſhipful Fraternity. To rank ſuch petty Fellows in Company with ſuch eminent Perſonages as merit the high Title of *Villain* is an unpardonable Error in Speech: Nay, the Vulgar go the Length to ſet it down as an infallible Maxim, that every Perſon that dies dancing is intitled to be inrolled of the honourable Corporation of Villains. But I think it my Duty, tho' but a younger Brother of the Order, to endeavour to convince the Publick, that they do your Society a great deal of Injuſtice, to ſuppoſe that the momentary Tenants of *Tyburn* have arrived to any ſuch Degrees of Wickedneſs, as to merit the Epithet of *Villain*, at leaſt in ſuch an extenſive Senſe as it belongs to your Tribe that frequent the moſt polite Parts of this Metropolis.

For my Part, I once imagined I might live to merit the pompous Title, with ſome of its lucrative Perquiſites; but, unhappily for me, I took a wrong Method. I ſet out on a wrong Scent at firſt; I was led away with the vulgar Notion, that to pick Pockets, cheat, and rob on the Highway, was the high Road to gain the Title of an accompliſhed *Villain*;

lain; but Experience has ſince taught me theſe were only the Steps to *Tyburn*, but far from being Qualifications that ranked me of that illuſtrious Society.

I went on in this Error for Years; and as I had gained ſome low Reputation among the Crew of ragged Raſcals I kept Company with, I conceited myſelf the Prince of Villains, and that my Name ſhould be immortal among the Chief of *Britiſh* Worthies; but, ſince my laſt Misfortune of being ſeized, I have fallen into a quite different Way of Thinking with reſpect to myſelf: Upon ſerious Recollection, I find I am but a Novice in Iniquity, a meer Pretender to Villainy, and that, if Villains only were to be hanged, I have no more Title to a Rope than I have to a Ribbon, and might obtain the one as ſoon as the other, if meritorious Villainy was to be a Qualification.

As ſoon as our pious Ordinary had read me the common Leſſon for Perſons in my Circumſtances, I was for ſome Hours in a very deſponding Way with regard to the State of my Soul; but, as I am not of a Temper much addicted to Melancholy, I began to caſt about in my own Mind for ſome Subject that would give me ſome Hopes of Comfort. On this Occaſion it was very natural for me to examine my paſt Life and Converſation, to find if there was any Room for Hope from Repentance. When I had laid the black Liſt before me, I began to ſum up the Account, and examine the Degrees of Wickedneſs I had been guilty of; this led me to compare my Actions with thoſe of other Men who were not under the ſame Sentence as I am. This afforded me ſome Glimpſe of Satisfaction, for it is always a Relief to the Unhappy, to find that they are not alone. I found myſelf indeed ſingle as to the

the temporal Puniſhment of this World, and was a little ſhagreened at the Partiality of human Laws, that ſeem to be calculated for puniſhing the petty Rogue and rewarding the arch Villain; but, with regard to Futurity, I was convinced, upon a thorough Examination, that I am in a much better State than many eminent Villains whoſe Stations ſcreen them from the Gallows.

Upon this comparative Examination of my paſt Conduct, the firſt Object that occurred to me was a Set of Royal *Villains*. I recollected the Tranſactions of moſt deceaſed Potentates, and found that I was but a puny Villain, when compared with ſome of the *Richards* of *England*, and ſome of the *Lewis's* of *France*; when I conſidered the dreadful Devaſtations ſome of thoſe purpled Rogues have made in the World, the Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Perjuries, and the monſtrous Catalogue of deadly Sins moſt of them were anſwerable for, I bleſſed myſelf that I was not a King, that I was not ſo wicked as many of them have been, who have received from their penſioned Flatterers the Name of Saint, glorious, pious, and immortal, with many other pompous Epithets, which Humanity ſhould bluſh to beſtow.

I am called a Highway-Man, a Robber, and a Villain, becauſe I take a Trifle from a Paſſenger; but theſe purpled Robbers are called Kings, though they rob whole Kingdoms inſtead of Hen-Rooſts, plunder whole Cities and Provinces, and murder Millions in cold Blood; had they been in my Caſe, they would have done the ſame Thing I have done; their Love of Juſtice could not reſtrain them from any of theſe Crimes with which I am charged; but they happen to be placed in a more exalted Sphere, are capable of doing more Miſchief, and, backed with Power, can conſtitute that Action juſt,

glorious

glorious and equitable in themſelves, which in me is Villainy, and attended with Puniſhment and Infamy. But Power cannot alter the Nature of Things, the Principles of Right and Wrong are eternally the ſame, by whatever Terms we expreſs them, and that All-ſeeing Eye, before whom all Diſtinctions of Perſons vaniſh, will one Day give the *Villain* to whom it belongs.

But to paſs from Kings, I viewed the Stateſman in all his Pomp of Power, and could fancy I could diſcern *Villain* writ in legible Characters. I could diſcover him cheating his Maſter, adminiſtring to his Paſſions to preſerve his Place, robbing him of the Affections of his People, by purſuing Meaſures diametrically oppoſite to their Intereſt; I ſee him proſtituting national Honour, publick Faith, and the Birthright of the People, for a Bribe; I ſee him poiſoning the Morals of the Nation, and corrupting their Repreſentatives; Corruption, Bribery, and barefaced Perjury are his Boſom Friends, and yet he prides himſelf in being honeſt; he would ſtart at the Name of Villain, and be aſhamed to be thought ſo great a Rogue as *Gentleman Harry*. But I thank God I am not Prime Miniſter to the King of *France*, that I have not ſo much to anſwer for, ſuch a dreadful Weight upon my Conſcience to diſturb my laſt Moments. I have been a Sinner, it is true, but the Miſchief I have done has been confined to ſome Dozen or two of People whom I have injured; but the Miniſterial *Villain* extends his Roguery over a whole Nation. Millions ſtarve by his Oppreſſion, whole Provinces are beggared by his Tricks, and Generations yet unborn may curſe his Exiſtence.

The penſioned Senator, who ſwears to do Juſtice to his Country, yet ſells his venal Vote for a Bribe, and barters national Liberty for a paultry Place, or ſome dignified Monaſyllable, ſtruts in his ill-merited

Ribbon, and affects to be called a Man of Honour, is ſtill more a *Knave* than I. I have been perjured, it is true, but the Effect of my Perjury was prevented, and, if it had taken Place, but few would have ſuffered; but the perjured Senator ruins the whole Kingdom, and beggars lateſt Poſterity; he eſtabliſhes Iniquity by a Law, and inverts the Order of Things; he betrays natural Juſtice, and proſtitutes the Honour of his Country, and makes Sale of its Liberty. I am hanged becauſe I cheated but a little; but he who gets Thouſands, by the blackeſt Treachery, uſurps the ſacred Epithet of Honeſty, and claims Honour as his Inheritance. How calm muſt my laſt Moments be in Compariſon of his, if his Conſcience has not loſt all Senſe of Feeling, or his Soul void of all its rational Faculties?

The pretended Patriot, who declares in the Senate for the Liberty of his Country, is zealous in its Defence, and ſanguine in his Oppoſition to every Meaſure that has the leaſt Tendency to oppreſs, inſlave, or drain the People, would make the Publick believe that he has monopolized all the Honeſty in the Nation, hates *Villainy* as he does the Devil or the Prime Miniſter, and watches Night and Day, from no other Motive but the publick Good; yet, in his Heart, pants only after Power, Place, or a Title, and is ready, on the firſt Occaſion that the Miniſter comes up to his Price, to read his Prayers backward, and give the Lie to every Patriot Doctrine he had before inculcated with ſuch Zeal and Induſtry; he is then as zealous for every Court Meaſure, as he was before active in his Oppoſition, and ſtill with the ſame Pretence to Honeſty: But when he comes to be as near Death as I am, when the Clouds of Ambition are diſſipated, the Film of Self-Love, Avarice and Pride taken from his Eyes, he

he muſt conclude that I am a Saint to him: If I robbed the Publick, I did it openly, and risked my Life for every Trifle I became Maſter of; but he has robbed the Publick under the ſacred Pretence of Friendſhip, and cheated under the moſt ſolemn Truſt. I robbed private Perſons, but he robbed the State, and made Sale of his venal Voice to inſlave future Generations: Under the Pretence of Zeal for the People he made them his Dupes, till he had enhanced the Price of his Villainy; and when he could raiſe his Market no higher, he cheats both King and People: I thank God I am no modern Patriot, and have not ſo many Sins to anſwer, ſo many Curſes of the Fatherleſs and Widows to prey upon my departing Soul.

In my own Imagination I ſtrayed to *Weſtminſter-Hall*, and peeped into the Breaſts of the Gentlemen of the long Robe, to try if I could diſcern any Thing there like myſelf. The Outſide indeed was fair; Juſtice, Law and Equity ſeemed to occupy every Man's Heart; but, upon a nearer View, I could diſcern nothing but Words, empty Sounds, and unnatural Diſtinctions; they profeſſed to protect the Innocent, to judge the Cauſe of the Oppreſſed, and to be the Stay of the Widow and Fatherleſs; but in reality Money was their only Motive. Men with ſquare Caps, and thoſe with no Caps at all, ſold their Talents, their Rhetorick, to the deſigning *Knave* and rich *Villain*, without any Regard to Juſtice or Equity. I found rich Rogues had their Counſel, who endeavoured to deſcribe them and their Actions in the moſt amiable Colours; while the honeſt Man, if poor, was treated as the Scum of the Earth. In one End of the Court I ſaw ſome Rogues puniſhed: But what Sort were they? Only ſuch as had not Money to purchaſe a Rope or to fee Counſel. In a Word, I found that the Word *Villain*, in *Weſtminſter-Hall*, ſignified only

a Fellow that was poor, and that Innocence always implied Riches: And here I learned that to be detected of Poverty was the only Crime; and that there was no Sin ſo heinous but might there find an Advocate to palliate it. In a Word, ſuch a Scene of Villainy and Oppreſſion diſcovered itſelf in that Spot of Earth, that I bleſſed myſelf I was not born near it, nor bred a Member of the black Profeſſion.

From *Weſtminſter-Hall* I tranſported myſelf to a convenient Situation, to view another Sort of Gentlemen in Black. I had not long contemplated the Inſide of the Reverend Clergy, before I was fully convinced that it was not the Cap that made the Friar, and that nothing is more different from one another, than the Inſide and Outſide of a Right Reverend. Sanctity of Manners, Humility, Patience and Charity, they claim as the diſtinguiſhing Badges of their Function: But where are theſe to be found? You may find a Needle in a Bottle of Hay with as much Eaſe, as diſcover them among the Generation of Caſſocks. They wear the Garb, the Symbol of theſe Virtues, but it is only as I uſed to wear a Vizard when collecting on the Highway, to conceal my own natural Countenance; for, ſtrip them of their Canonicals, and you find underneath groſs Immorality, Luſt and Drunkenneſs, with a long Catalogue of deadly Sins; Pride, ſpiritual Pride, Avarice, and Diſſimulation, are almoſt the conſtant component Parts of a modern Prieſt. This Reflection brings to my Mind an Interview I had with a Clergyman ſome Years ago. I had been out upon the Pad, in a County not far diſtant from *London*, and, for ſeveral Days, had met with but very little Booty. My Misfortunes were ſuch at that Time, that a little Money was abſolutely neceſſary; and, upon finding myſelf long diſappointed

pointed of a Relief in the deſparate Way I had undertaken, Shagreen, Vexation and Fatigue, threw me into a ſlight feveriſh Diſorder. This obliged me to put up at a Publick-Houſe, not far diſtant from the Common where I was ſtationed. I had not been long here, when a Clergyman entred the Houſe, and ſat down in the ſame Box in the Kitchen where I ſat. The Sight of a Parſon, which, till that Time, always inſpired me with awful Reſpect, brought to my Mind many melancholy Reflections. My Indiſpoſition helped to give Way to them, and I found myſelf almoſt reſolved to emboſom myſelf to the Prieſt, in Hopes to find from him ſome Eaſe from the Torment of a guilty Conſcience. For this Purpoſe I entred into a Converſation with the Parſon, whom I found, to all outward Appearance, to be ſedate in his Behaviour, modeſt in Converſation, and every Way qualified to diſcharge the Duties of his Function with Conſcience and Decency.

After ſome Chat upon indifferent Matters, I found Means to perſuade the holy Man to go into a private Room. Here we called for Pipes, Tobacco, and a Bottle of Wine; and I was juſt caſting about for an Opportunity to introduce my Caſe to the Doctor, when he moved for a Pack of Cards to paſs away the Time. As we had hitherto been converſing of Matters pretty ſerious, this Overture gave me ſome Diſguſt, in the Temper of Mind I then was in, and ſuggeſted to me that I ſhould make farther Trial of the Temper of my *Levite*, before I truſted him too far. Cards we got, and we played at Cribbage for Sixpence. The Parſon had not played above a Rubber or two, before I could diſcover that he underſtood all the Tricks and Shufflings upon the Cards, as well as the moſt experienced

perienced Gambler of us all. I plyed him with a Glaſs, and found him a Toper; and, in an Hour or two's Time, I found, by the Prieſt, that he had as much need of Confeſſion as I had; not indeed for collecting, that he had not a large enough Share of natural Courage for; but every other Vice, that does not merit the Gallows, he was poſſeſſed of in a ſuperlative Degree. Though the Parſon underſtood Shuffling pretty well, yet I got the better of him at Cribbage; and ſome other Games we played, till I got Maſter of his Watch and ready Money, both which anſwered the particular Sum I then wanted. I treated my Prieſt with his Reckoning and a W——re, and returned to *London*, cured of my Qualm of Conſcience, and my Veneration for Prieſthood, without ſo much as attempting to rob on the Way, though I had many Opportunities. Now, I deſire to know, whether *Gentleman Harry*, or the Man in the Caſſock, is the greateſt *Villain*. That he is the greateſt Hypocrite, I think, is paſt Diſpute; he would have cheated me at Cards if he could, therefore my cheating him was only Self-Defence; and I think, according to the Opinion of Caſuiſts, no Crime; for they have an Adage among them in my Favour, *Falere fallentem non eſt fraus*, which I underſtood to ſignify, To cheat the Cheater is no Fraud. I conclude, and I think fairly, that a Man who is capable of putting in Practice the low Tricks at Cards, would, if he had Courage, and was drove to that Neceſſity, take to the Highway. As for all other Vices, he was in no Degree inferior to me; therefore, if you add to his Account Hypocriſy, and the Miſchief he does to Society by his Example, I may without Vanity aſſume to myſelf the Character of a much honeſter Man than he, or any other in ſimilar Circumſtances. I am far from inſinuating

that

that all in Orders are like my Companion; by no Means; there are Gentlemen of the Caſſock that are an Honour to their Profeſſion, and of real Service to Society; but I would inſinuate, that a profligate Clergyman, whether he obtain the Gallows or not, yet, according to the ſtrict Rules of Equity, merits it more than a petty Felon; and is often the Occaſion of many a poor Wretch's Ruin, by giving him a mean Opinion of Religion, and leſſening the Influence it ought to have upon his Morals, by his Example: For it is natural for the Ignorant, when they ſee the Parſon or Curate of the Pariſh act as if he did not believe what he preaches, to conclude that Religion is all a Farce, a Trick of the Prieſts to to blind the World, and cheat them of Tithes. But enough of the Gentlemen in Black; let us try what Title the Gentlemen in Red have to Honour and Honeſty, about which they make ſuch a Rout.

The Colonel boaſts himſelf a Man of Honour, and would draw his Sword upon any Man who durſt charge him with Knave or *Villain*; he ſcorns to cheat any Man, and in his own Conceit is mighty honeſt. It is true he does not pick Pockets at the Play-Houſe, or rob on *Kennington-Common*; he is no Shop-Lifter, and would not ſteal a Coat or a Shirt for the World: But the honeſt Man is not aſhamed to make falſe Muſters, and cheat the Publick of the Pay of a Dozen or two of Men every Day he riſes: He makes no Scruple of picking the Men's Pockets of their Clothing, and pilfering from them all the Clothes he wears in a Year, and ſome Hundreds of Pounds beſides, by conniving with Corporals and Serjeants, and a thouſand little Tricks, which every Man learns ſo ſoon as he is dubbed a Colonel: He is not aſhamed to ſell Commiſſions, the Property of honeſt ſenior Officers, to ſome moneyed Scoundrel

who

who has no other Title to Courage or Honour, but two or three hundred Pounds he has earned by pimping for ſome State *Villain*. Thus the Bread of the Publick is eat by Cowards, and the Honour of the Nation proſtituted to, and the Security of the People truſted in the Hands of a Set of Miſcreants that are a Scandal to the Sword, and a Reproach to the ſacred Commiſſion they wear: But theſe are genteel Rogues; Eſquire is added to their Name; and, becauſe they do not pick Handkerchiefs out of Gentlemens Pockets, they diſdain the Name of *Villain*; but when Death looks them in the Face, and ſtrips Things of their borrowed Epithets, and ſhews them naked their Crimes as they really are, they muſt confeſs that *Gentleman Harry* is but a Novice in Wickedneſs to one of them.

Theſe I have hitherto mentioned are exalted-titled *Villains*, dignified Rogues; but the Scene of Iniquity is not confined to the Court End of the Town; it has ſpread itſelf over the whole Nation; all Ranks of Men are more or leſs tainted with Vice, and purſue the profitable Trade of *Villainy*, without the Danger of Hanging.

The Victuallers of the Navy, the Commiſſaries of the Army, put in for their Share of the Golden Fleece, love and practiſe the Thing, enjoy the Profits and mighty Emoluments of profitable Iniquity, but hate and deteſt the Name. Thoſe who contract to furniſh the Navy take large Prices from the Government, but are not contented with reaſonable living Profits; they make no Bones of poiſoning the Sailors, and ſtowing our Ships of War with Proviſions fit to poiſon Dogs; by this Means Thouſands of our brave Tars die yearly; yet theſe Fellows are not guilty of Murder or Robbery; not they, they ſcorn the Name: But if they eſcape cor-

poral

poral Puniſhment here, by the Means of their Intereſt with yet more elevated *Villains*, there is a Time when Court-Intereſt cannot avail them, and they ſhall be tried at a Bar where Killing is deemed Murder, whether it is committed with a Poinard or rotten Beef and Bread; where Robbery is adjudged ſuch, whether it is perpetrated by ſuch as *Gentleman Harry*, or by an honourable C——r of certain Boards. But I thank God I have no Murder to anſwer for directly or indirectly, no innocent Blood to ſtain my Soul with: The higheſt Crime I have to charge my Conſcience with is Perjury, and even that admits of ſome Alleviation in my Circumſtances. The Multiplicity of Oaths in this Country has in a great Meaſure weakned the Obligation of an Oath among the Vulgar; and even the Law lays ſome Temptations in the Way of Men of leſs rigid Morals, to make free with their Conſciences on this Occaſion: The Example of the Great is another ſtrong Biaſs upon our Minds, to think leſs horribly of the Crime of Perjury. The Practice of bribing and corrupting, in ſpite of all Oaths and moral Obligations, which we ſee daily, leſſens the Horror of the Sin, and makes us fancy that the Laws promulgated, and the Doctrines preached againſt that Crime, receive their Force, not from the Nature of Things, but from the Circumſtance and Character of Perſons.

Cheating I have been guilty of; but if I am to be hanged for Cheating only, and my Gallows as high as *Haman*'s, and that placed on the *Cupola* of St. *Paul*'s, there is ſcarce an Object I could ſee from that Height, but in ſome Meaſure has profited more by the Trade than I, tho' I ſuffer the Puniſhment. Cheating is the Secret, the only Secret of getting Rich; Honeſty, mere plain Honeſty, ſtarves and goes a-begging in this Metropolis: Knavery,

tho'

tho' under a leſs odious Name, goes an eternal Circle thro' all Trades and Profeſſions, tho' none are hanged for it but the little petty Rogue, or the Fool. The Gallows ſeems not ſo much calculated for ridding the World of *Knaves*, as of Fools. If a Fellow has Ingenuity enough to get an Eſtate by Cheating, he diſclaims the Name of *Villain*; but if the Rogue is tattered, and cannot live by the Trade of legal Tricking, he is certainly hanged.

This leads me to apply all that I have ſaid to the Purport of my Title-Page, from whence it is plain, that if *Villainy* is to be explained by the Degrees of Miſchief it does the Society, the poor Rogue, that is hanged or gibbeted, is by many Degrees honeſter than the *Villain* who ſtruts in his Star, the Biſhop who groans under a Mitre, or the Officer daubed in Scarlet: For this Reaſon, my Lords and Gentlemen, I would have you promote a Law, that ſuch poor Fellows as are hanged may not be dignified with the Title of *Villain*; that belongs only to Men of your eminent Proficiency in Wickedneſs: Your Honour is concerned to wipe off, from your numerous Society, the Scandal of being thought ſuch little Rogues as thoſe that go to *Tyburn* in a Cart: For my Part, I once had the Ambition to be thought a notorious *Villain*; but, after this Review, I am contented, now that I am going to die, to gain the Character of a little ſneaking Sinner; and I confeſs myſelf by many Degrees honeſter than moſt of you; and therefore do no think, tho' I have the Honour to be hanged, that I incline to uſurp the Name of *Villian*; no, I leave it to flouriſh with you and your Poſterity; and I flatter myſelf that you will put *Tyburn* out of Countenance, and convince the World, that being hanged is a greater Proof of a Man's Folly, than of his *Villainy*.

F I N I S.